

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROCESS

PURPOSE:

To develop a system for coordinating mowing activities (Maintenance) and spraying applications (Roadside Environmental) to maximize the effectiveness of both operations while increasing cycle times between mowing operations.

NARRATIVE:

The Roadside Environmental Functions of brush control and plant growth regulation have limited windows of opportunity for application, yet the benefit of both can be greatly enhanced with proper timing of mowing ahead of the applications. With respect to brush control, Maintenance would historically perform year-round A-boom mowing operations to control roadside vegetation (brush) while Roadside Environmental would spray brush control applications on certain routes during the months of August and September. This time period was selected to cause the 'brown out' of sprayed vegetation to occur in conjunction with the natural browning which occurs in the fall; thereby minimizing visual impact. On routes that were sprayed, brush could theoretically be controlled for 3-4 years; however, if the sprayed routes are mowed too soon after spraying, the benefit of the spray application is lost. However, if the routes can be mowed by May preceding the spray application, the maximum benefit of the application can be obtained by postponing the need to A-boom mow that section or roadway for several years. Similarly, plant growth regulators when applied immediately following an early June mowing can reduce the occurrence of bahai grass while encouraging centipede. While the operations of Maintenance and Roadside Environmental could be mutually beneficial if coordinated and timed appropriately, there had historically been no system for accomplishing this end.

To facilitate better planning and coordination of these interdependent processes, the District Engineer and County Maintenance Engineer in conjunction with Roadside Environmental should develop and/or update the *Vegetation Management Brush Control Map* which includes all Interstate, Primary, and Major Secondary Routes. This update should be performed by November 1 and be used to 'flag' routes that have been recently sprayed for brush control so that the CME can establish a 'no mow' status on the treated section. As soon as practical but no later than January 1, Roadside Environmental should notify District / CME of routes on which they intend to apply brush control in the fall along with a tentative list for the following two years. Maintenance will then begin A-boom mowing of the routes designated for the upcoming fall and set a target completion of May 1. In addition, Maintenance should try to time shoulder mowing (grass) of four-lane divided routes to occur in early June and then notify Roadside immediately upon mowing so that plant growth regulator can be applied. Traditionally, this treatment has been performed in medians of four-lane divided roads; however, the practice should be expanded to shoulders of four-lane divided roadways in order to reduce mowing cycle requirements. Beginning August 1 through early October, roadside environmental will complete the brush control application and get with Maintenance to provide updates by November 1.

SUGGESTED PRACTICE:

Vegetation Management Brush Control Map -- An overall Divisionwide map to include all Interstate, Primary, and Major Secondary Routes. The map will be utilized to track which routes had brush control treatments and when as well as which routes are proposed for upcoming treatment.